

Theology vol 9.

A DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

Mr. Grounds and Scheme, &c.

AND

Tom Woolston.

IN WHICH

The Insincerity, Inconsistencies, and Absurdities, contained in the Latter's Discourses on our SAVIOUR'S MIRACLES, are fully detected and proved, and that from a bare Principle of Reason only, and from his own Arguments.

ALSO

The Impossibility of an Imposture in the Christian Religion unexceptionably made out; and that Part of it in particular of the Resurrection of CHRIST amply considered;

AND

The chief and principal Objections urged by that Author against it, in his pretended Jewish Rabby's Letter, fully refuted and answered.

Inscribed to the Reverend Clergy of the Diocese of
LONDON.

*And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain,
and your faith is also vain. 1 Cor. xv. 14.*

L O N D O N:

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[Price Six-pence.]

DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

Mr. Grounds and Schenck, Esq.

AND

Tom Weston

A PLAY IN

THE LANGUAGE OF THE FUTURE

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "THE FUTURE OF THE FUTURE"

AND

THE AUTHOR OF "THE FUTURE OF THE FUTURE"

THE IMPROBABILITY OF AN

END OF THE FUTURE

OF THE FUTURE OF THE FUTURE



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DIALOGUE

Between *Grounds* and *Scheme*, &c. and
Tom Woolston, concerning the Mi-
racles, &c.



R—ds. Mr. *W—n* I greet you. I have long wished to meet you, and to have some Conversation with you upon certain Topics.

W—n. I return your Compliment, and am proud of the Acquaintance of the sagacious and learned Mr. *G—ds*, who alone could stop the rapid Torrent of spiritual Deceit, and confound even the mightiest of the Ecclesiastical Noodles, by ruining the Foundation of their feeble Superstructures; and re-establishing on its ancient footing, the glorious Privilege of Free-thinking. But——

Gr—ds. Hold, hold, Mr. *W—n*, since you have lately exhausted your good Nature in Encomiums on your Reverend Patrons, I fear you have none left but ill-natured ones. Therefore spare good Sir, your ludicrous Expressions, and favour me with a serious Account of the Reasons that induced you to
A publish

publish your Discourses on the Miracles of
JESUS.

W—n. I protest I have too great a Veneration for your learned Performance, and wise Principles of Toleration, to salute you, Great Sir, in a jocular Manner. But since Compliments are offensive, I will without any farther Preamble, tell you frankly what Motives engaged me to write those Pieces.

First, A profound Respect and Veneration for the holy JESUS, whom I could see no longer thus vilified and abused. To suppose him, the only begotten Son of God, to have descended from Heaven, and to have suffered an ignominious and shameful Death, for a Race of ungrateful Creatures, whom out of his infinite Mercy he had vouchsafed to take out of nothing, must needs shock the Understanding, and be repugnant to the Reason of any good Christian: Besides, the Miracles recorded to have been wrought by him here on Earth, if taken in the literal Sense, are absurd and improbable, as I have made it appear; but if looked upon as Types and Allegories of what he the great Messiah shall fulfil in the Spirit, (as no doubt it was intended by the Evangelists) in this Sense I say, each Particular contributes to magnify his Honour and Glory. My

Second Motive was, Charity for my fellow Creatures. It is a Duty incumbent upon every Man of parts, to bring all his ignorant fellow Creatures, equally placed here for the Honour and Worship of Almighty God, to the true knowledge of him; and if it lies

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in his Power, to defend them from the Delusions of the Prince of Darkneſs, whoſe Miniſters are conſtantly employed for the ſake of Lucre, to promulge, even the moſt deſpicable Doctrines, about the ſupreme Being.

Therefore have I laboured to awaken the pretended Chriſtians, from a groſs and dangerous Error, they were lulled into by a Crew of profligate hireling Priests; who vending thoſe abſurdities, boaſt of them as Remedies for the diſtempered Soul, when in the main, like true Quacks, they labour but to enrich themſelves, though at the expence of the Welfare and Lives of their Patients.

And

Thirdly, Theſe Pieces may ſerve for a Moderator between you Great Sir, and the Orthodox Cuſhion-thumpers. They clear from before us the Rubbiſh which prevented a compleat refutation of your Doctrine; and I fear not but I have effectually done that, by fixing the Name of CHRIST on a firm and ſtable Baſis, by deſtroying the Literal Senſe of the Life and Miracles of the Holy JESUS; and proving them to be meerly Typical and Allegorical. And thus I appear the true Moderator.

Gr—ds. A Refutation of my Doctrine! If no better had appeared (as I doubt very much whether there has) I might juſtly extol my ſelf, as the Author of the trueſt, and moſt rational Principles of Religion, that ever were laid down. And as to the whole, I am of Opinion that nothing but an abſence of Reason, or elſe a dull and ſtupid

instinct, could make any one publish such a heap of absurd and contradictory Reasonings, as your florid Discourses are made up with.

W—n. Oh, Oh! Mr. *Gr—ds*, I little thought you so zealous in the Defence of your Principles: But however, since it is so, I should be glad to hear you prove my false reasoning; tho' if you should happen to discover any Contradictions, I hope at least, you'll be so generous an Adversary as not to expose me to the ignorant Gospel Higglers abroad.

Gr—ds. Before I enter upon the Point in debate, give me leave to ask you one serious Question. You seem so much to expostulate with the hireling Ministers of the Gospel, I fancy if some good Bishop had thought fit to hire you to a Living of 4, or 500*l.* a Year, you would not have been so rash as to strike thus boldly at the very Foundation of the Church; and from Circumstances, I conclude, that if your Pamphlets did not sell for more than they cost you, you would not have taken the pains to have printed them.

W—n. Pardon me good Sir, for not answering you that Question at present, we'll refer it to another time; besides it is remote from our Subject, therefore pray resume the Thread of your Discourse and proceed.

Gr—ds. By waving the Question you seem to plead Guilty; but in order to prove that your Discourses on the Miracles of *JESUS* are absurd and inconsistent with right Reason, and tend to no less than downright Infidelity, (I speak at present of them in general, for I have not time now to examine every particular

cular Absurdity, though I may take a cursory View of some of them *en passant*) I proceed in the following Method.

First, To show the Connection there is between the Scheme you lay down, and the general Propositions you make use of to prove it by, and that they are incongruous and contradictory to each other: At the same time I shall examine how far those *Holy Divines* the antient Fathers, make for you in the Passages you give us from them, and how they agree among themselves, according to your Quotations.

Secondly, How the Prophecies are fulfilled by your Typical and Allegorical Interpretation. And

Thirdly, The Nature of the Evidence we have of those Facts, you call but Typical and Allegorical Narratives, deducing from your Hypothesis some necessary Consequences.

The strongest Subterfuge, my Antagonists have recourse to (you say in your Discourses) *Is the Letter of CHRIST's Miracles, for the Confirmation of his Messiahship from Prophecy. But alas! (you continue) these are built on so weak and sandy a Foundation, that without your Interpretation all must fall to the Ground and be demolished; that is, without taking them according to the good old-Way, as actually never wrought; and what the Evangelists tells us concerning them, and the coming of the Messiah only Allegorically and Typically: From which Sense at once you can demonstrate the Truth of Christianity, and*
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ruin and overthrow the Doctrine of Grounds and all its Consequences; and that as you declare (let me once more repeat it) by supposing and allowing, that the literal Story of CHRIST'S Life and Miracles, is *an absurd and incredible Romance, full of Contradictions and Inconsistencies, and that Modern Paraphrases are at best but a consequential Reflection on the Intellects of the Evangelists, and their divine Gifts of the Spirit, i. e. by supposing the Letter of the Same.* This it is certain and most evident is your whole Scheme upon which your Reasoning is founded, and without maintaining and proving of which you effect nothing, but remain an Orthodox or literal Collybist (as you call it). Now let us examine these Propositions you bring for the making of it out. In the first you will show that the Miracles of healing all manner of bodily Diseases, which JESUS was justly fam'd for, are none of the proper Miracles of the Messiah, &c. In the 2d, That the literal History of Many of the Miracles of JESUS, as recorded by the Evangelists, does imply Absurdities, &c. consequently, in Whole or in Part, were never wrought as they are commonly believed: And in the 3d, You will show that JESUS could not properly and ultimately refer to those Miracles he then wrought in the Flesh; but to those mystical ones he would do in the Spirit, of which those wrought in the Flesh are but meer Types and Figures. Now if JESUS was justly famed for Miracles, and if the literal History but of Many implies Absurdities, and not of all; and if they but in Part were never wrought

wrought, and if those wrought in the Flesh were but Types and Figures, what more does the Bi— of *London* require? Since it necessarily follows that the literal History of JESUS (by that Method of Reasoning which is your main and principal Part) is true; but besides Reason, you make use of Authority and undeniable Evidences, to second and establish what you assert, avowing yours to be the primitive Doctrine, the holy Fathers of the primitive Church *who thus received it from the Hands of the Apostles, who confessedly were endowed with Divine and Extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit, and therefore could not contradict each other, or teach false Notions about the Miracles of our Saviour, or be so much as mistaken about the Evangelical Sense and Nature of them.* But how do these mighty Divines and great Philosophers help you out? By at once ruining the Letter of the Life and Miracles of JESUS, say you: Thus the Great *Origen* you cite in p. 8. *Whatsoever JESUS did in the Flesh, says he, was but Typical and Symbolical, of what he would do in the Spirit:* And in p. 10. *That though many were brought to believe in JESUS upon the fame of his Miracles, which he did once amongst the Jews, yet his Mystical ones prove his Authority.* Likewise *John of Jerusalem*, That JESUS's Cures performed upon the Blind were great and considerable, but unless he do daily as mighty Works in his Church, we ought to forbear our Admiration of him. Next is your mighty Father *Austin*, in p. 18. JESUS condescended to do these little Miracles of healing all bodily Diseases, which were but the Type

Type and Shadow of his more stupendous Miracles of curing spiritual Diseases. These I think are Quotations sufficient for my purpose, since the Tenor of all the others must be agreeable to them, proceeding from Men equally inspired with divine and extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit, and from whence I may justly conclude (since they confess CHRIST did actually work Miracles in the Flesh, which were Types, &c.) that the literal History of these Miracles, directly contrary to what you assert, is certain and true, established most firmly by these above cited Quotations. Whence I shall pass to consider the Agreement and Harmony you make betwixt those holy Divines and inspired Men. In order to which I would premise one Thing, that is, That it appears to me that your Idea of the DIVINE SPIRIT, must be quite different from the General one, almost universally agreed upon among Christians, viz. that the HOLY GHOST, or SPIRIT of the supream Being, is the Center of Truth and Knowledge : But I say, although you profess him to be such, your Idea of him must be entirely foreign and different from that Definition ; for according to you it is impossible he can be either the one or the other, I mean either the Center of Truth or Knowledge ; else how could these holy Fathers endued with *such extraordinary Gifts from him*, so grossly contradict each other, as you manifestly make them.

As——

W——n. Alas, now I fear I am reduced to my last shifts indeed ! Tho' you must read over my Discourses

Discourses with better Attention than you seem to have done, before you are able to prove that : However go on, you will make this out as lamely as the rest.

Gr—ds. You may laugh and banter Mr. *W—n* as much as you please, it is only ridiculing your self; for in what I have hitherto said, I have not advanced one Syllable of my own, but plainly opposed one part of your Reasoning to the other; as I shall in like Manner do in the Quotations you urge from those divine Fathers. As for Instance, when you introduce them speaking against the Letter of that Miracle of *JESUS* driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple. In your 30th Quotation you make the great Doctor *Hillary* say, That there was no such Market in the Temple of *Jerusalem*, as the Gospel supposes, and you agree with him that none would be so foolish as to believe, Oxen, Sheep and Goats were there sold. Yet a little while after comes in grave St. *Austin*, very civilly giving him the Lie, telling us, *Where could be the great Sin of selling and buying Things in the Temple, that were for the Use of it, and offered as Sacrifices in it.* Much like unto which is your 31st and 32d Quotations, the former from St. *Ambrose*, who you say, is against the Letter of this Story, and the latter from great St. *Jerome*, who you confess gives us a literal Exposition of it, as far as it will bear; from whence it is evident one of those three Things must inevitably follow, that either you have not the general and same Idea of the divine

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Spirit as all Christians have, or that these great Fathers were guilty of great Errors, altho' endowed with it; or lastly (which is more than possible) that it was in you, Sir, a failure of the Senses when you quoted them, which oftentimes happen to Mankind, when their Souls take a mystical Tour in their spiritual Habitations, there to recreate themselves with immaterial and most wonderful Operations. This I think may reasonably be supposed your Case, since you so strenuously and vigorously plead for your self - inconsistent Cause. But to proceed——

W—n. You are merry Sir, I like it. It is the Life of Conversation; but yet what you call a slip of the Spirit is altogether as serious, and indeed I think too serious to Jest with, and just as I imagined, so have you effected, that is, made this out as lamely as the others. For when St. *Austin* says, *Where could be the great Sin of selling and buying Things in the Temple that were for the Use of it, &c.* He speaks in opposition of CHRIST's driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple, and not of *Hilary*; though I confess he seems to intimate a literal Sense of it, but that proceeded only out of Indulgence to the Evangelists, for whom all the Fathers had a mighty Respect and Veneration, therefore abominated the very Thoughts of an absurdity in them, and were willing to favour as much as they reasonably could, the Letter of their Narrations. Thus you may see in *Jerome*, as I mention in my 32d Quotation from him. Now I r, where is your slip of the SPIRIT;
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take wholesome Advice, be more cautious for the future, and think before you speak; or else Dr. Ro——rs himself may at last nonplus you.

Gr——ds. I think it is nothing to the Purpose, whether *Austin* speaks in opposition to *Jesus* driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple or not: The Question is, whether he does not intimate or give us to understand, that there actually was a Market in the Temple, and which you rightly grant he does, since the Words expressly declare it: *Where was the harm of buying and selling Things in the Temple*, says he, *which were for the Use of it*, when at the same time *Hilary*, you say, declares plain enough, there was no such Market there, and even you seem to agree with him in this, *That none would be so foolish to believe that Oxen and Sheep were there sold, if the Evangelists had not asserted it*: (From whence follows this natural Consequence, that all that are Christians should believe them, and firmly adhere to whatever they say. Thus you should do, since you profess being such; but this *en passant*) Of like import is your Quotations from *Ambrose* and *Jeronie*, which may be examined in your first Book. Thus from all what I have urged without examining your false and disingenuous Quotations, or gross misrepresentations of the Fathers or those times in which they lived, that they received their Doctrine from the Hands of the Apostles, or their favouring the Evangelists, &c. I may justly close this Head with the following Consequence; that your

reasoning is contradictory and incongruous; that the very Propositions you advance, by which you are to prove your Assertion, destroys and at once ruins the very Assertion it self; That the Authority you urge to prove your Points by, declares for what you are to overthrow, and that even the divine SPIRIT, according to you, evidently contradicts and belies it self. In short Sir, it is both amazing and surprizing to me, how a Person in cold Blood, endued with Sense and Reason, could set himself down and write such an incoherent and inconsistent Rhapsody of Nonsense. This may be called a true Paradox; but to come to my second Head.

W.—n. Proceed Sir, I like to hear you talk; but I beseech you let it be pertinently, and to the Point. Your second Head is curious; but take care and treat it cautiously: I shall give a due Attention. See what a great Man I am, that can thus cut out Work for the great and learned Mr. *Gr—ds*, as well as for a B—p of St. *D—s*.

Gr—ds. There is no great precaution as I can see to be used in it. All I have to examine is, How the Prophecies are fulfilled by your Typical and Allegorical Interpretation of them; whence I shall make appear, that they cannot have been accomplished, and that you as well as the whole Body of those who embrace your Opinion, destroy and ruin the very Groundwork and Foundation of Christianity, and so inevitably must be as great Infidels as many are pleased to make me. To confirm a comple-

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tion of a Prophecy (or a Thing foretold some Years before the Event, which can neither be given forth by human Foresight, nor fulfilled in a Counterfeit, if it is possible for such a Thing to be) it is absolutely necessary for our Conviction, that the Fact or Accomplishment thereof be cognizable by our Senses; for without that we can have no sufficient Grounds or Reasons to receive that Prophecy as fulfilled. Now I say, according to you the completion of not one single Prophecy has happened yet, for they are all to be accomplished at CHRIST's spiritual Advent, or coming in the Spirit. But I answer, CHRIST is to come yet, for neither you nor any one else can prove that he has been in the Spirit to confirm his Messiahship: Now it is manifest that the Truth of the Prophecies depends upon his coming, as that of his coming upon the Prophecies. Consequently, neither the one nor the other are true, but the effects of Enthusiasm and Imagination, not to say Imposture; this is the Consequence of your reasoning. Besides, if the Accomplishment of these Predictions are to be in CHRIST's spiritual Advent, I can't see how it is possible we should be competent Judges of their being fulfilled; since it is by the Cures of the spiritual Infirmities of the Soul, for our Senses in temporal Things may easily be deceived, nay, frequently are so; now if in those very Things, for which they seem to be originally made, they are not oftentimes sufficient Judges, it certainly must be impossible they can have the least perception of those Things which are entirely contrary

trary to their Nature, *i. e.* spiritual ones ;
 Therefore I say, from your Method of Interpretation of Prophecy, there can be in Fact no such Thing as a Proof to us, our Senses not being Evidences in this Case; whence it follows, that those Prophecies pretended as such, can be at best but the effects of Enthusiasm, not having had (as you will have it) an Accomplishment, nor it being possible they should have any, as to convince us. Thus you see your Doctrine tends to the very destruction of the Foundation of Christianity; and your divine Fathers must have been gross Infidels; and now leaving the World to judge of you, I pass on to my 3d and last Head: On which all I have to offer is, That the Nature of the Evidence of the Facts (the Being of JESUS and his Acts) appears to be such, that if it is not true we can have no Ground or Foundation to believe any ancient Transaction whatsoever; for we have here not only the Testimony of many Authors, his Contemporaries as well Followers of his Opinions, as his most profest and inveterate Enemies, who all, far from denying his being in the Flesh, or the Actions he pretended to have wrought, endeavour only to disparage or ridicule them as Impostures and Cheats, the effects of an Enthusiastical Brain; as doth *Porphyry, Celsus, Julian and Hierocles*. So that to be brief I conclude, that if they are not real Facts, we must necessarily bid adieu to all History, and then will it be incumbent on you to prove it (as well as yourself) only a Type or a Parable, though our
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Friend *Henly* has saved you the Trouble of typifying your self, since he has already fairly done it for you. Thus I have I think evidently made appear from the whole of what I have offered on these three Heads, what I had to prove, *viz.* That your Arguments are incoherent with themselves, and not consistent with right Reason, and tend to no less than downright Infidelity; whence I shall deduce the following Corollaries.

That since your Arguments are not consistent with right Reason, and manifest Absurdities are contained in them, your exposing them in publick cannot be out of love of Truth or Charity to your fellow Creatures as you pretend: For every Man endowed with the least portion of Reason, of which you appear not to be destitute, must observe the manifold Contradictions and Inconsistencies in them; therefore it must be some other Motive that encouraged you in that Undertaking, and perhaps either the love of Money, acquiring it by dazzling the Eyes of Mankind under pretence of Novelties, and an Introduction of a new Model of Christianity, of which you know them very fond: Or else Revenge, for being disappointed in Church Preferment, not having a good thumping Living, the undoubted cause of your bold and daring Dedications to the Reverend *B—ps*, and your continued Series of Reflections on the Clergy in general. Now Sir, have I completed what I intended, desiring you to reflect on what I have advanced, and wishing you may ruminate a satisfactory and just Reply,

ply, to which I am ready to give careful Attention, and that I can assure you would be both agreeable and pleasing to me, as a sincere Votary to right Reason, and admirer of Truth.

W—n. So Mr. *Gr—ds*, you have ended this Part of your Narration, and thus pull'd poor *Tom Woolston* to pieces, and withal appear to be somewhat in a Passion about him too: But how do you like my last Piece just published? doth it not serve your turn compleatly? does it not sap the very Root and Foundation of the Letter of Christianity? My honest Friend the Jewish Rabby, destroying in an Instant the Story of CHRIST'S Resurrection. Oh the mighty Miracle!

Gr—ds. Aye, had he done that justly the Foundation of Christianity would indeed have been destroyed; but that I fear (provided it be impartially examined, according to the Account of that Story given us by the Evangelists) will hardly be accomplished. And I blush, when I behold one dignified with the Character of a Man of Letters, as I understand you are, to borrow from a Jewish Rabby (both prejudiced and illiterate) some scurrilous and trifling Objections against the Letter of Facts that are so well attested, and to compleat all, seem to espouse them as Satisfactory.

W—n. Nay, I think they are most ample and answerable ones, against that stupendous pretended Story; a Story that according to the Letter, by all honest Men, should be detested and abhorred: For considering with
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my old Friend the Rabby, these three Particulars, who can believe it?

First, That it manifestly makes the Son of God most grossly bely and contradict himself, telling us he would remain three Days and three Nights in the Heart of the Earth; when it is evident from the Event, he was but two Nights and a Day, from *Friday* Evening to *Sunday* Morning; which yet (contrary to the Computation of both Jews and other Nations) the hideous Beasts of the Letter, have a most particular knack of making three Days and three Nights. What a gross Abomination?

Secondly, That CHRIST (though knowing that he was taxed for being an Impostor) neglected the most effectual Method to confirm the truth of his Mission from God, and to convince all Mankind thereof; I mean he should have shewn himself, after his Resurrection, to the high Priest and the Chiefs of the Jewish Nation, which would have been an irresistible Conviction to them, as well as the whole People; nay even to all succeeding Ages. This *Origen* himself confesses to be a vast Objection, and (I must needs say) favours somewhat of Imposture.

Thirdly, That there was a great possibility of an Imposition in this Case, considering all the Circumstances, and this Important one in particular, that the Guards who watched the Sepulchre were Roman Soldiers and Pagans, who esteemed the whole Jewish Institution as Enthusiasm; and were moreover encouraged by their Governors, to promote discontent

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and uneasiness among them: Thus and from their low Circumstances, it follows, that those Guards might easily be bribed by the Disciples, either by Money or Liquor, to connive at their Imposture; but all this is too plain to be insisted on. These then Sir, I call most rational and important Objections, of such weight, that I defy the most learned Literalist to solve them.

Grounds. I, though no Literalist nor Religionist, will from the same Principle that I have examined your other Absurdities, do the like with this. When the Cause of Truth is concerned, I look upon it incumbent on every Man to defend it, when he beholds it oppressed: This then being the present Case, I will make it appear that you have urged nothing weighty in all that you or your Rabby have said against the Resurrection of CHRIST; but have given a greater Proof of your Insincerity. First then, I will shew from the Account the Gospel gives us of those Persons, who were to be the Authors of this Fraud, that it was impossible there could have been any; and afterward consider your two Objections. To forward an Imposture of this Nature, there are some Things so essentially necessary, that without them, there is an unquestionable impossibility for such a Thing to be; they are as follows.

First, Authority or Money to support it.

Secondly, Craft and Courage to carry it on.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, Vicious and dishonest Principles,
and

Lastly, Some prospect of Gain in the effecting it, as Riches, Honour and Glory.

These are the Qualifications the Apostles were to be possessors of, according to your Supposition; but if the contrary appears from the Gospel, it remains that your Hypothesis is false and absurd. Now let us try what Scheme the Gospel pursues, and what Idea it gives us of them. Opposed to the first, it expressly tells us, they were poor labouring and miserable Fishermen, Inhabitants of mean Villages, the most despicable of their compatriots, having but their Net to gain them subsistence, and a Cottage to dwell in, without a penny more than necessary to supply their common Wants, or on occasion to pay the Tribute to their Prince; and these you look upon as the Persons that went and brib'd the Guards of the Chief Priests, when they were hated by reason of their mean Extraction, and abominated for following an Impostor (as the Jews called him) and were in short, in the greatest Distress and Misery. If any Man in his Senses, can believe what you assert, when he considers the Story in this Light, I will give up the Cause.

Secondly, in this State and Condition, it is easy to guess how far their Craft might extend. They Understood (it may be presumed) their Occupation to catch Fish, but their Skill went not beyond their Net; and here the impossibility of a Cheat will appear very plain again, when we consider, that the Eyes of

the whole Nation, at that time assembled at *Jerusalem*, were fixed on the high Priest and Sanhedrim, for executing that *Jesus* who was so much talked of. Now to think that they should suffer themselves to be thus grossly abused by a few poor despicable and ignorant Fishermen, that knew hardly to read, and that too at a Time when they could order what Guards of their own they pleased, and were afraid of a Tumult, is downright stupidity and madness. Moreover, if *CHRIST* be imagined the Forger of this Imposture, his cunning, superior to that of his Disciples, should have conspicuously appeared. The greatest Craft I think that could be used by him was to deceive them by privacy and secrecy, in order to put it out of their Power to detect him; instead of this he declares openly that to confirm and crown his Mission from God, the third Day he would arise from the Dead. That they should have no sign but the sign of *Jonas*: That as he was three Days and three Nights in the Belly of the Whale, so should He, the Son of Man be three Days and three Nights in the Heart of the Earth. This was a noble Method of keeping it concealed, from Men who had Authority and Money, who neglected no means for his Execution! Their All manifestly depending upon the discovery of this Imposture. Such also was the Courage and Resolution of these Apostles; they professed, it is true, they would stick close and adhere to their Master, yet when it came to the Test, one betrayed him, another denied him, and all fled and abandoned

doned him upon his Apprehension. These are ardent Marks of their constancy and courage ! Were a parcel of such mean spirited Men fit Persons to carry on such an Imposture against the chief Men in Power, with the apparent hazard of their Lives without any manner of view of Advantage ? Oh Strange !

Thirdly, The Principles of an Impostor should be dishonest and vicious, for where he doth act contrary to the eternal Rules of Justice, Truth and Equity, it is impossible they can be otherwise. Yet we find those of the Apostles were intirely opposed and contrary to this also ; theirs being founded on the most perfect and strict Rules of Morality. *That they were good and holy Men, appears from every part of their History. They not only reprov'd others for their Vices, but carefully avoided the same themselves, and were Examples to all Men of the Virtues they recommended to their Practice. The manifest Design of their Discourses and Epistles is to recommend the fear of the supreme Being, the love of Justice and Charity, Sobriety, and Temperance, in reference to our selves ; and of these Things, they were Patrons as well as Preachers, and had no secret Vices that were ever fastned on them, that could cause Men either to suspect their Mission from God, or their own belief of the Doctrines they taught. They allowed no criminal Liberties, nor gratification of the sinful Passions of Men, either to gain themselves Friends, or to Proselyte any, but taught one Scheme of Doctrines, Virtue and Goodness, from the Beginning to the End of their Preaching.*

Thus

Thus speaks the learned Mr. Chandler, in his Discourse on Miracles : And p. 142. in another Part of it, *The great Design of Christianity* (says he) *is to establish the belief of a God and his Providence, and a future State of Rewards and Punishments; to teach us the spiritual Nature of God, and that the worship of the Heart and Spirit is most acceptable to him to recover Men from their Idolatry, and bring them back to the worship of the one, only Being, and true God; to teach Men their Duty to each other, and oblige them by the strongest Motives, to observe and Practice whatsoever Things are True and Honest, and Just, and Pure, and Lovely, and of good Report, and Virtuous and praise Worthy; and to persuade them to mortify every inordinate Affection and evil habit within themselves; and to attain to those excellent Dispositions of Mind by which they may resemble God, become most useful in Life, and be best prepared for future Happiness. In a Word, to establish the Practice of those two great Duties, the love of God and love of our Neighbour, upon these two excellent Principles, that of faith in God, as a rewarder of those that seek him, and faith in JESUS CHRIST, the Saviour and Judge of Men. If this is a Doctrine consistent with Imposture; if those precepts can be reconciled with Deceit and Juglary; if there ever has been since the Foundation of the World, as we can hear, any Man, or Body of Men, that attempted to impose on Mankind upon Principles of this Nature; or if it is possible any of the Jews, even to the worst of Men amongst them, who had daily such signal Instances*

of

of the Judgments of God upon those who prophaned and impiously blasphemed his most sacred Name ; if (I say) any thing of this Nature can be supposed, we might have some room to imagine Christianity is such.

The last particular or note of an Impostor is, that there should be some temporal gain of Riches and Wealth, Honour and Glory, &c. This is plain and evident ; for if Men knowingly and willingly usurp a Character, and act to the deceit of their fellow Creatures, under the pretence of a Mission from God, they can expect from an offended Being but a just retribution of their Crimes in another State ; wherefore it cannot be for a Recompence in that State. And, granting an Impostor rejects all Thoughts of futurity, yet he must have some Motive for his enterprise, else he would be deemed a mad Man ; and if so, what can it be but some temporal Advantage ? Thus *Mahomet*, a notorious Example of an Impostor (we find) made the Riches and Honours of this World his chief aim : He aspired not only to a prophetick Character, but the Government of an whole Nation : He inticed, he flattered, and allured Mankind by gratifying their Passions as far as answered his Views, and studied chiefly the taste of unenlighten'd human Nature. What policy could not effect, he did with Fire and Sword, ravaged and destroyed Countries, 'till he brought all under Subjection, and made a poor and wretched illiterate People his Followers and Disciples. But those Doctrines does the Religion of CHRIST detest and abhor.

abhor. CHRIST preached to all the Vanity
 of the Riches and Honours of this World;
 pronounced Anathema upon those who made
 their Belly their God, and studied the satis-
 fying their Luxurious Passions before the
 Service of their Creator; he refused the
 Pomp and Grandeur of this uncertain and
 transitory Life, preferring before them Po-
 verty and Misery; he chose the mean deno-
 mination of a Son of a Carpenter, before the
 high and florid Title of a mighty King.
 His Apostles followed his Foot-steps, and
 according to his Precepts prepared no Treas-
 ure for their Subsistence, but trusted in his
 Promise; they made Converts, not by re-
 plenishing them with the Goods of this
 World, but declaring to them the difficulty
 of a rich Man's possessing eternal Happiness,
 enjoyning them to forsake all they had and
 give it to the Poor, as if it were unworthy
 of a Christian to live in Plenty, when his
 fellow Creatures were in Want and Misery.
 They rejected and rebuked those who would
 have worshiped them, assuring them they
 were Men as well as themselves, subject to
 the same Infirmities and under the like yoke
 of Bondage. In short, whatsoever could de-
 tach Men from this World, and turn their
 Thoughts intirely off of it; whatsoever
 could counterpoise or stop the career of
 their Passions, CHRIST and his Apostles
 preached and published. Thus I conclude,
 that there not being one Mark, one sin-
 gle Note essential to an Impostor, applica-
 ble to the Preachers of the Gospel or the
 Chri-

Christian Doctrine, but on the contrary, strong and evident Characteristics of their Mission from God, it must necessarily follow, that they had a just one, and propagated that Religion under his Direction and Providence.

From what I have said it plainly appears, there was an impossibility of a Fraud in the Resurrection of CHRIST, since the Apostles were wanting of the principal Means to effect it. I will now briefly consider, for the sake of Truth, and discovery of your farther Insincerity, what you more particularly say concerning it in your pretended Rabby's Letter. *If it was impossible to evade the Guards of the Sepulchre (say you) then there was a real Resurrection; but if there was but a bare possibility of evading them, this answer is of no force. And I am of Opinion the Thing was not only possible, but easily feasible and practicable, though the Roman Soldiers were of as much fidelity and integrity as any of their Profession, yet it is well known, such Creatures are subject to Bribery and Corruption. If the Disciples had any Money to tempt them with, &c. And a little farther you go on, saying, of what Number the Watch did consist is uncertain; your Whitly says they were Sixty, but he has no Reason or Authority to think they were so many; if they had been a Guard against Violence, I should easily have believed they were more; but in as much as they were only a Watch against fraud and against any casual defacing of the Seals on the Stone before the chief Priests came to open the Sepulchre, three or four*

D Soldiers

Soldiers were sufficient, and I don't think there were any more set to this purpose.

In what you offer here, appears to be (from the Account given us of the Resurrection) a manifest falshood.

First, Because it is expressly shewn in the Gospel, there were no Roman Soldiers concerned in the Guard of the Sepulchre, which will follow also from your own reasoning. And

Secondly, That it carries the highest probability of there being at least a Number proportionable to those that guarded him at his Crucifixion.

For Proof of the first we find in the xxvii chap. of *Matthew*, that upon the Application of the chief Priests to *Pilate*, for Soldiers to guard the Sepulchre (apprehending an Imposture in the Words of CHRIST, that he would rise on the third Day) they were refused by him, he making them this reply, *You have a Watch of your own, go and make it as secure as you can.* Now what Watch can this be supposed, other than some who inhabited or resided in or about the Temple, dependants on the high Priest, or else such as are our Night Watch in this City, and doubtless in whom the Jews might surely confide in, and whose prejudices and zeal were not a little against CHRIST. Moreover, how could the Jews rely on the Roman Soldiers in an Affair of this Importance. You confess your self in several Places of the aforesaid Letter, that the Romans promoted the Discontents and Divisions amongst this People; then can you
imagine

imagine the chief Priests and Pharisees such
 gross Noodles, as not to be sensible of it.
 Nay, St. *John* tells us expressly in his 11th
 chap. that in a Council assembled, caused by
 the Resurrection of *Lazarus*, the chief Priests
 declared, that if they let *JESUS* alone, and
 thus go on with his Miracles, the Romans
 would come and take away their Place and their
 Kingdom. Now upon such a Thought that
 it was advantageous for the Romans to keep
 up their Broils and Divisions, and upon the In-
 timation of such a thing as above, can it be
 supposed, I say, that the chief Priest and
 Pharisees were such Fools as not to have a
 safe Guard of their own, to prevent the least
 Imposition, particularly in this Point, being,
 as I said already, the chief and grand Arti-
 cle incumbent on them to detect in the Im-
 posture. The Romans in no wise it appears
 would concern themselves in the religious Af-
 fairs of the Jews. The Acculation of
CHRIST before *Pilate* was not for any breach
 or contempt of their Law, of which they
 accused him before *Caiphas*, but the weight
 of his Charge was, that he set up in opposi-
 tion to *Cesar*. Likewise, when *Paul* is brought
 before *Festus*, upon the Jewish Accusation, this
 Governour seems rather to acquit him than
 any thing else, telling *Agrippa* that the Jews
 accused him of certain things about their
 own Superstition, and of one *JESUS* whom
 he affirmed to be alive and they dead. He
 speaks with that ignorance and unconcern-
 edness of those great Transactions in their
 Religion, which manifestly shows it was the

farthest of any thing from concerning him. Thus we might conclude, had we not this positive Testimony of *Pilate's*, not allowing them his Soldiers for a Guard, which they demanded only out of respect to him as *Cæsar's* Deputy, we might (I say) with Justice conclude, it is highly improbable and absurd, the Jews should insist upon having them, or that they should trust to Roman Guards when they might put their own. Now I might very reasonably question how your Jewish Rabbi could have impudence enough to palm such a falsity upon the Public, and the learned Mr. *W—n* should be weak enough to defend it. This being made out, the second Point, *viz.* of what Number the Watch consisted, is easily determined; not to repeat what I have so often said, the Importance of this Event to the Jews, if we only consider the Prejudices they were under against CHRIST, on Account of the Reputation his Transactions had acquired him, which the Gospel mentions in many Places, and which is even confessed (as has been observed) by his very Enemies: If their Vigilance (I say) as it is highly probable it was, was only proportionable to their Malice and Prejudice, no reasonable Man would conclude, but that instead of two Guards, they had two Hundred on his Sepulchre. Besides, we find that at his Crucifixion, they did not confide in the Centurion alone for his Execution, but they, even the chief Priests, Scribes, and Elders themselves were resolved to see it performed, and beheld him laughing and scoffing; then how much more

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more rational is it to suppose, that if they did not watch themselves the Sepulchre, they had a number of Persons sufficient to make the security and truth of the Event indubitably certain. I shall conclude this Head with the Words of that learned Prelate. Dr. Burnet, in his Exposition of the 39 Articles : Speaking on this Subject, he says, *The chief Priests and the Pharisees must be thought a strange stupid sort of Creatures, if they did not examine where the Apostles were all that Night : Besides, many other Particulars which might have been a Thread to lead them into strict Inquiries, unless it was because they believed the Report that the Watch had brought them of CHRIST's rising again. When they had this certain Reason to believe it, yet resolved to oppose it, the only Thing they could do was to seem to neglect the Matter, and only to decry it in general as an Imposture, without going into Particulars ; which certainly they would not have done, if they themselves had not been too sure of the Truth of it. And in the Paragraph following When all this is laid together, says he, it is the most unreasonable thing imaginable to think that there was an Imposture in this Matter, when no colour nor shadow of it ever appeared, and when all the Circumstances, and not only Probabilities, but even moral Possibilities, are so full to the contrary. Thus I——*

W——n. Hold Mr. Orthodox, and be not in such a hurry I beseech you; would it not have been happy for you, Great Sir, had I introduced such a Controversy as this before : Then would you have exerted your self to the utmost

utmost of your Power, to shine in defence of the Literalists, and not had occasion to stand out so publickly in opposition to all Religion. Then, I dare say, Bishop *Gibson* had not given you so close a Rub, as to tell us you wrote for the sake of Honour and Reputation only, under the Cloak of Truth and Sincerity; as in his *Pastoral Letter*, he says, you have been often heard to declare, *That let the prevailing or received Opinion be whatever it would, you would write against it.* They are I think Words at least of this Import. A noble Sentiment indeed! But come Mr. *Grounds*, let us hear my two great Objections solved; they are old and trifling, yet don't slip them over, for your assistance is required in explaining that part of Scripture. I hope Sir, you are not angry with me, for repeating the Bishop's Observation. 'Tis our present Conversation gave me the Hint; besides, I am credibly informed, that his Lordship is so precautions, he says nothing but upon sure and certain Grounds.

Gr—ds. I have too great a deference to his Lordship's Character to contradict that Paragraph; but I only appeal to the World to testify what service I have been to Mankind, and how I have stood out for Liberty upon noble Principles of Toleration. I appeal to all impartial Men, to declare whether there is not a vein of sincerity runs through all my Writings, and I protest to you, I have not the least view in our present Conversation, but those I have so often repeated; the Cause of Truth and Sincerity,

ty, for the service of my fellow Creatures, which is more than you dare to mention, since your very Writings fly in your Face and condemn you. Now I take hold of your weighty Objections as you imagine them through your Allegorical Senses.

The substance of the first is in your usual Stile, *That CHRIST belies himself, in saying, that he would be three Days and three Nights in the Heart of the Earth, when the Event, you say, proves he was but two Nights and a Day; from Friday Evening to Sunday Morning, which yet contrary to the computation of both Jews and other Nations, the hideous Beasts of the Letter (a handsome Compliment for an Admirer and Disciple of the Fathers) have a particular Knack of making three Days and three Nights.*

In answer to which I urge, that it betrays in you a vast ignorance and insincerity (tho' I rather believe the first, upon account of your bringing in a Jewish Rabby) when you say, *The Jews did not calculate so, as to make the time of JESUS being in the Sepulchre, conform with his Promise of the term of three Days and three Nights:* These two following Reasons show evidently the contrary.

First, Because that they reckoned their Day from the Evening or Night preceeding. And

Secondly, Because that they frequently took a part of that Day for the whole.

In order to prove the first Point, it is observable, that a Day vulgarly speaking with us, signifies

signifies no more than an Interval of Time, from the rising of the Sun to the setting of the same. With the Jews it signify'd differently (as in many cases it does with us a part of time of twenty four Hours) this we find by the Greek Word *νυκτήμερον*, which properly means what the Hebrew Language (according to Dr. *Whitby* in his Comments, and other learned Men tell us) could express but by two Words, viz. Day and Night, which Day and Night made up with them, but one *νυκτήμερον*, as the Greek's call'd it, or as we might say, a natural Day of twenty four Hours, compounded of a Day and a Night. Conformable to which we find in the first of *Genesis*, that it is said, *The Evening and Morning were one Day*. And in *Levit. xiii. 32. From Evening to Evening shall ye celebrate your Sabbath*, whence it appears, when they say in Scripture, so many Evenings and Mornings, Days and Nights, it signifies so many natural Days of twenty four Hours, compounded of a Day and Night, or as the Greek's by the compound Word call'd it so many *νυκτήμερα*.

Secondly, We find they frequently reckon'd a part of a Day for a whole. Thus it is said in *1 Kings, 20, 29. The Armies encamp'd seven Days near each other*. Yet on the seventh Day the Battle was fought; and in *Esth. Chap. iv. 16. When she tells Mordechai, go and fast for me three-Days and neither eat or drink, Night or Day*, she means so many *νυκτήμερα*, or as it is highly reasonable to think, a term equivalent to which JESUS was in the Sepulchre; for who can imagine *Mordechai* could subsist without eating or drinking three full Days and Nights, or 72 Hours?

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Hours? besides we find Chap. ii. 1. *Esther went in unto the King on the third Day.* Thus Circumcision was instituted after eight days, yet they always circumcised and do now Circumcise on the eighth Day. But all this I suppose your Rabbi forgot, leaving the chief Articles of his Officiating to you to perform. But to sum up the whole, if CHRIST was part of three *νυχθήμερα*, or part of three natural Days of twenty four Hours, compos'd of a Night and a Day each in the Sepulchre, it may be reasonably said according to the above method of Calculation and expression, he was three Nights and three Days, or three *νυχθήμερα* under Ground. Now CHRIST was put in the Sepulchre, three Hours at least before Sun-set on the Friday, which was part of the first *νυχθήμερον* from Thursday Evening to Friday Evening; he was from that time to the Sabbath Evening, which made up the second; and again from that time to the first Day of the Week in the Morning, which was a part of the Third. A part is often took for the whole among the Jews, consequently it may be said CHRIST was three Days and three Nights in the Sepulchre, or which is the same thing three *νυχθήμερα*.

But supposing this Calculation was not just, which tho' from Fact it is impossible to deny, yet I cannot see that when CHRIST says, *They should have no sign but that of Jonas the Prophet, as Jonas was three Days and three Nights in the Belly of the Whale, so should the Son of Man be three Days and three Nights in the Heart of the Earth* (which he does not mention above twice in the whole Gospel, expressly telling us that he

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would

would rise on the third Day) I cannot, I say, yet perceive every particular of it should be literally true, for it is not mention'd here as a Prophecy. CHRIST uses it by way of Illustration only (says a Christian) to signify to the Jews that the sign of the deliverance of the Son of Man from the Grave should be as wonderful as that of *Jonas* out of the Belly of the Whale, and that it was as true a Declaration of his being the *Messiah*, as the event was of *Jonas* being a Prophet; and under the special care and protection of Heaven. Moreover I look upon it that we might with equal Reason expect that CHRIST should have been lifted up in the same Manner and Position, as *Moses* lifted up the Serpent (since he tells us that *as Moses lifted up the Serpent in the Wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up*, John. iii. 14.) As that he should according to each particular of the other Passage remain three Days and three Nights in the heart of the Earth. And I am much surprized you did not take hold of that Expression of CHRIST's, when he says, in the same Passage, he should be in the heart of the Earth, since it is plain from the Event, he was laid in a Sepulchre hewn in a Rock, and that in a superficial part of the Earth too. This Would have been a rare quibble indeed for *Tom Woolston*, and just suited his Rabbinical Genius.

Your last Objection with which I shall conclude, is taken (as well as the others) from your old Master *Celsus*, and is if possible yet more trifling. It is that of CHRIST's not appearing, after his Resurrection, to the chief

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chief Priests and Elders ; which you say must have been an irresistible conviction to them, as well as to all the other Jews ; and this you tell us *Origen* confesses to be a great Objection. To which I answer, it is far from being any, if we consider,

First, The Works and Miracles CHRIST had antecedently to this performed. And

Secondly, The End and Design of Christianity.

To the first I say, The multitude of Miracles CHRIST had already done (some of the most stupendous, that can be well imagined, contrary to all those Laws of Nature Providence has established) so publick and conspicuous in Presence of the whole World, allowed off and confessed by the chief Priests themselves (such were the Resurrection of the Dead by a bare Word, even the Dead already putrified, multitudes of Blind restored to sight, and healed of Diseases avowedly incurable by natural Performances, the Lame cured, and Demoniacks restored to their former State) : Those Miracles, I say, were such evident Testimonials, such emphatical Proofs of a divine Mission, that it was unnecessary to offer any more, and which were, one would think, more than sufficient to work a Conviction on the chief Priests. Besides

Secondly, the end and design of Christianity we find manifestly to be this : To bring Men to the knowlege of the supreme Being, by a fair and rational Conviction ; to deal with them as with free Agents and reasonable Creatures ; to offer them for that end certain Marks and

Signs capable of persuading unprejudiced Reason. This being then, (as it is obvious) its original Intent, it remains that the croud of Testimonials already mentioned are sufficient, and in demanding CHRIST's Appearance as an irresistible Conviction, you require more than Christianity supposes necessary. You require that Men should by an over bearing and an irresistible Power, be obliged and impuls'd to embrace it, in spite of all their rational Faculties, or their glorious Privilege of free Agency. And why might we not beseech you, as well ask, why CHRIST did not descend from the Cross, when the chief Priests reviled and scoffed at him, saying, *If he be the Son of God let him come down from the Cross.* This must have rather been a more effectual and irresistible Motive of persuasion; though it would be plainly destroying the end and design of what his suffering Death for the People was to confirm and prove. In fine, we may as well wonder why God did not at once touch the Heart of the Jews and immediately convert them, which is upon the Foundation of Christianity absur'd to suppose; and what is this other than reflecting on his Wisdom and Knowledge. Thus we should conclude, as *Origen* says on this Point, *That the Works of God are dark and mysterious, and rather to be believed than to be deeply pry'd into;* and not as you would falsely insinuate that he confesses it to be a vast Objection.

W—n. Oh, Oh, Master Grounds! This Argument I cannot let pass unanswered, because

cause it carries the Absurdity higher than any you have yet mentioned; for what can those Miracles of raising the Dead, of healing all manner of Diseases avail you, since I have proved if those Stories are literally taken, they are Improbabilities and Impossibilities. Ah Mr. *Grounds*, I wish your different Metamorphosis and various Shapes and Transformations, first Deistical, and then Orthodox, may not be imputed to you at the Great Day, when the mystical JESUS shall come in all the Glory and Magnificence of the SPIRIT, when poor *Tom Woolston* shall be raised on a spiritual pinnacle of Honour, and shall triumph over all the monstrous and frightful *Hydra's* of the Letter; when he shall crush those wretched *Dives's* with the Foot of his Parabolical *Lazarus*, and plunge them in the Allegorical Abyss of Darkness and Misery, where reigns the dismal Prince of Typical Torments.

Gr—ds. You talk wildly, those Words Mystical, &c. distract you, have you forgot already how I just now have proved the Letter of those Miracles to be true, the impossibility of a Fraud in the whole Gospel, according to that System laid down in it? Besides, those Miracles must have been necessarily supposed true, before touching at the Proof of the Resurrection; for as they are antecedent to it, and that it has a manifest dependance on them, it would have been absurd and ridiculous to support the one, when the others had been already proved Groundless. Thus I have from a Principle
of

of Truth, Honesty and right Reason, (free from Bigottry or Superstition) proved the fallacy, insincerity, and I might justly say, stupidity and madness, of your famous Discourses on CHRIST's Miracles, and laid open your mighty and ingenuous Moderatorship; a compofure of Inconsistencies and Contradictions, and now you may speak of me as bad as of the Clergy if you please; but know that I think it my Duty to defend Truth at all times; therefore will I finish with these few Words of Exhortation to you. To take heed of those strange Words Allegorical and Mystical, and rather shun them than misuse them: Beware of their not effecting your rational Powers (though I fear it is telling it you somewhat late) beware of Insincerity in whatever Opinions you publish or any ways declare to embrace: Consider how by the destruction of Religion, you encourage Men in their Vices and Debaucheries, you plunge them in all the Disorders and Immoralities the World can afford; and in the end occasion their utter Ruin and Destruction.



F I N I S.

